

Select Board Report 4/15/20

The Impact of the COVID-19 Virus on Government Operations in Nelson

Conduct of Town Business

Consistent with your Select Board's concerns for the health and safety of our constituents and of our employees, we, on March 13, closed all of our town buildings to public use until further notice. Essential town government services are being provided via telephone, email, letter drop box, and USPS.

Business Portion of Town Meeting

As you know, our Town Moderator, Lew Derby, in consultation with the members of the Select Board, postponed the business portion of our Town Meeting from March 14 to May 16, 2020. The postponement of this meeting was allowed by the NH Attorney General and NH Secretary of State provided that a subsequent date be set for holding the postponed meeting, subject to future amendment. The Board's motivation for recommending that our Town Meeting be postponed was (1) that a gathering of 50 to 100 people in the Town Hall could contribute to the spread of the disease (2) that eligible voters, by virtue of their fear of contracting the COVID-19 virus, would choose to not attend and thus be disenfranchised.

At this writing, our goals and concerns remain even greater than they were on March 13. It appears likely that much will not have significantly changed by May 16. We expect that the potential for contracting the COVID-19 virus will still exist in all the cities and towns in NH. We imagine that the practices of "Social Distancing" and wearing face masks, when in public, will still be in place and that it is highly probable the Governor's emergency executive order prohibiting gatherings of 10 or more people will still be in effect. All of this begs the question of when and under what conditions can we hold the meeting?

Selecting a Date

We are continuing to provide routine town services, Administration, Fire, Police, and Highway, as we would in the months prior to approval of any appropriations for a new fiscal year. We have sufficient cash on hand and will be supplementing that cash with our normal property tax billing and collection in June as well as motor vehicle registrations. Of course, no special projects or purchases, as proposed in the 2020 Town Warrant, can be undertaken or made without the approval of the voters at the business meeting. As a result, we could hold the business portion of our Town Meeting any time prior to tax rate setting time in early fall.

In the Meantime

Stay well and stay tuned. Continue to follow both national and state health safety guidelines and administrative orders. We'll do our best to find a way to conduct your Town Meeting as soon as we believe that we can do so safely for all who wish to participate.

Nelson Board of Selectmen

David Upton, Chair

Maury Collins

Gary Robinson